

This Week in Congress

September 4, 2007

Dear Friend,

Welcome to "This Week in Congress." Yesterday, I joined Kansans in Hoisington for the community's annual Labor Day parade and celebration. Labor Day was designated as a federal holiday more than 100 years ago to honor the efforts and contributions of the American working man and woman. I enjoyed taking time to celebrate the day and appreciate Danny Biggs driving me in the Hoisington parade. This week, I am back in Washington, D.C., as Congress returns from the August district work period. I hope you find this newsletter useful.

Meeting with Kansas Law Enforcement Officers about Methamphetamine

As part of a congressional fellowship this fall, former Kansas Bureau of Investigation (KBI) Director Larry Welch and I are conducting meetings with law enforcement officials - both Kansas sheriffs and city police officers, as well as leaders of the Drug Enforcement

Administration (DEA) in Washington, D.C.

This week, Mr. Welch and I met with Kansas law enforcement to discuss current challenges they face. We started in Kansas City, Kansas, where we rode along with Police Chief Sam Breshears. Also with us was KBI Assistant Director Larry Thomas. The Kansas City police department recently seized 31 pounds of finished methamphetamine, demonstrating that this drug is not just a problem in rural areas. Following our time with Chief Breshears, we met with several city police officers to hear about challenges they face fighting crime in the city.

We also met with law enforcement officers from several east-central Kansas counties for a discussion in Emporia about the ongoing battle against meth. My thanks to the following for taking time to join us for the discussion about issues in rural areas: DEA Acting Resident Agent Tyler Graham of Wichita, Lyon County Sheriff Gary Eichorn, Lyon County Undersheriff Richard Old, Wabaunsee County Sheriff Doug Howser, Chase County Sheriff Richard Dornecker, Anderson County Sheriff Scot Brownrigg, Coffey County Sheriff Randy Rogers, Osage County Sheriff Laurie Dunn, Greenwood County Sheriff Mark Kenneson, Butler County Sheriff Craig Murphy, Woodson County Sheriff David Waddell, and a representative from the Sedgwick County Sheriff's office and the Shawnee County Sheriff's office.

While we have made progress in the fight against methamphetamine made in our state, what I heard from the sheriffs is that more work is needed to fight this drug that targets our towns - both large and small. Importation from Mexico has presented new challenges to law enforcement officers who are being forced to change and adapt to the many new ways used to break the law. With Director Welch providing his insight from his decades of experience, I hope to find new ways to keep more drugs off of our streets and out of our communities.

Welcoming a New City Manager to Emporia

Before visiting with law enforcement officials in Emporia, I stopped by City Hall to welcome the new city manager to Emporia and to Kansas. Matt Zimmerman moved from Chicago about four months ago to become Emporia's new city manager. I expressed my interest in working closely with Matt, his staff and the city commission.

Joining Federal Communications Commission Head at Rural Broadband Summit

Access to reliable high speed broadband internet services is critical to the future of rural Kansas. Many businesses and families simply will not come to rural communities that do not have broadband options. On Wednesday, I participated in a rural broadband summit at the Dole Institute of Politics in Lawrence that was attended by many industry, government and community leaders for a discussion on how to bridge the digital divide between urban and rural areas.

I was honored to introduce Michael Copps, one of the three commissioners of the Federal Communications Commission, before his keynote address. Mr. Copps spoke about the need for

our country to invest in broadband infrastructure. In 2002, the U.S. ranked fourth in the world in broadband expansion. Today, the U.S. is ranked fifteenth. My thanks to State Representative Tom Sloan for hosting this important event.

Preparing for the Transition to Digital Television in 2009

On Monday, I met with members of the Kansas Association of Broadcasters to discuss current issues affecting the broadcast industry. Most important on the list is the transition of television from analog to digital. In February 2009, TV stations nationwide will be required to switch from the current analog method of transmitting TV signals to digital TV. Households across the country will benefit from this new broadcasting technology, but will need to take steps before that time to make the transition. More information about the necessary steps is available on this Web site of the National Association of Broadcasters - <http://www.dtvanswers.com/> . Though much time remains before this takes place, I encourage Kansans to explore their options in order to make this a smooth transition.

The Kansas Association of Broadcasters will be working in the next year and a half to educate and help Kansans through this process. Thanks to Gary Shorman, General Manager of Eagle Communications; Mark Vail, Vice President of Eagle Communications; Mike Fell, General Manager of KXXX radio in Colby; John Ewy, Communications Director for Dodge City Community College; and Joy Haverfield, General Sales Manager for KWCH-TV of Wichita for taking time to visit with me. Prior to the meeting with the KAB, I was able to visit with longtime broadcaster and friend Bob Schmidt of Eagle Communications.

Troops Deployed from Fort Riley

I attended the First Infantry Division Combat Aviation Brigade Deployment Ceremony at Fort Riley on Thursday. I am always impressed by our soldiers and their willingness to serve our country. I am thankful for their bravery and for the understanding and support of their families. Thank you to Colonel Jesse Farrington and Brigadier General Keith Walker for their hospitality. I look forward to the safe return of the Aviation Brigade to Fort Riley. These soldiers and their families will be in my thoughts and prayers.

Kansas State Fair to Begin this Week

As summertime comes to an end and fall begins, Kansans are preparing for the annual Kansas State Fair. This year's event, "Hang with the Hogs," begins this Friday and runs through Sunday, September 16. I will be at the fair this weekend and will participate in WIBW Radio's Farm Bill Forum on Saturday morning at 11:00 at the AT&T Arena. I will also have a booth located in the Pride of Kansas building where members of my staff will be on hand to answer questions and provide information to fairgoers. The booth will be open every day of the fair.

The fair has always been a special event for me and my family. Robba is in her seventh year

as a member of the State Fair Board. In addition to showcasing what is best about our state, the fair gives me an opportunity to visit with many people and get direction on what I need to focus on in Washington, D.C. I hope to see you and your family in Hutchinson at the fair.

13,000 New Jobs Coming to Kansas through BNSF Railway Company

On Wednesday, I joined Gardner Mayor Carol Lehman, City Administrator Stewart Fairburn and President of the Gardner Chamber of Commerce Peter Solie in a briefing by officials at Burlington Northern Santa Fe Railway on their plans for the new intermodal facility to be located in Gardner. An intermodal facility is a transfer point where rail cars are switched to containers and trailers for the unloading and placement on trucks. Gardner was selected by BNSF for many reasons, including its proximity to Interstate 35.

Scheduled to open in 2009, this facility will cost close to \$155 million and bring about 13,000 new jobs to Kansas. As a member of the House Transportation and Infrastructure Subcommittee on Railroads, I am aware of the importance that Kansas plays in our nation's rail system. I appreciate the city officials and representatives of BNSF taking time to give me an update and tour of the proposed site.

Providing a Congressional Update to the Members of the Leavenworth Lions Club

On Thursday, I was in Leavenworth to visit with the Lions Club. I provided a congressional update to the group of more than 100 area residents and talked about education, health care and energy independence. I also discussed the role of Fort Leavenworth, military retirees, veterans benefits, and the upcoming report to Congress by General David Petraeus about the war in Iraq. Thank you to State Representative Kenny Wilk for arranging my visit, president of the club Bill Broeker for his hospitality and past president Ross Markle for introducing me to the group.

Touring University of Kansas School of Medicine in Wichita

On Friday, I was in Wichita to meet with officials at the University of Kansas School of Medicine-Wichita and tour the campus. I met with the dean of the school, S. Edwards Dismuke, M.D., and my longtime friend and President of the American Academy of Family Physicians Rick Kellerman, M.D. We discussed current health care issues such as physician shortages, residency education and state funding. In my opinion, the accessibility and affordability of health care is the number one domestic issue facing our country.

Working to get Rural Electric Co-ops Reimbursed from Winter Storm Damage

Rural electric cooperatives in our state suffered costly damages when the severe winter storm struck the western part of the state on December 31. I visited with Federal Emergency Management Agency officials this week about getting the disaster assistance money that is due the cooperatives. The reimbursement is awaiting approval by FEMA in Washington, D.C. I will continue to be in contact with FEMA officials to see that this needed funding comes to our Kansas rural electric cooperatives.

Kansan Serves as the President of the American Association of Bankers

I stopped in Hutchinson this week to meet with Earl McVicker, President of Central Bank and Trust. Earl is currently serving as the President of the American Association of Bankers. I congratulated Earl for his role in the association. It has been a long time since a Kansan has led this significant organization. We talked about issues important to bankers, including the state of the U.S. economy, concerns about rural Kansas and the desire of bankers to have a level playing field with other financial institutions.

Welcoming Teachers Back to Hays High School

With a daughter in high school, I was able to attend the Hays High School open house this week to meet with my daughter's teachers. While the focus was on my daughter and her schedule for the upcoming year, it was also a good opportunity to visit with the teachers about all of change going on as result of No Child Left Behind.

In the Office

Jodi Schmidt of Hays was in with the Hays Medical Center to discuss health care issues. Several Kansans stopped by my Washington, D.C., office this week for a tour of the United States Capitol building, including Scott and Jamie Lohmeyer of Goodland, Dennis and Lovene Clennan of Hutchinson, Charles and Doran Clemence of Abilene and Phil Lowe of Jetmore. In from Topeka were Chris Tilden, Chad Austin, Gloria Vermie, Allen Sester and Lori Howard. Brad, Philisha, Tyler, Austin and Trenton Stallbaumer and Bobbi and Kennedy Korpi, all of Centralia, also stopped by for a tour.

Very truly yours,

Jerry